

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04 INR-05

LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OCE-00 CCO-00

USPS-01 OPR-01 A-01 /070 W

----- 024714

R 071801Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3986

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 26494

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH LABOR SCENE

REF: PARIS 26250

1. SUMMARY. END OF PTT STRIKE STILL NOT IN
SIGHT. WHILE MAJORITY OF STRIKERS ARE REPORTED TO
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REJECT GOF PACKAGE RATE OF STRIKE PARTICIPATION IS

DROPPING. DESPITE NEW MEETINGS SCHEDULED WITH PTT STATE SECRETARY, MOST LIKELY GOF STRATEGY WOULD BE TO ALLOW FAMILY AND PUBLIC OPINION PRESSURE TO END STRIKE. CGT AND CFDT ATTEMPTING PREVENT THIS BY MOBILIZING PUBLIC SECTOR WITH ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICS, WHETHER THOSE OF UNION LEADERS OR OF RANK AND FILE ACTING ON THEIR OWN, CAN NOT ONLY ORIGINATE STRIKES BUT CAN COMPLICATE THEIR EVOLUTION AND CONFUSE EFFORTS FOR SETTLEMENT. THIS WAS NEVER MORE TRUE THAN IN THE CURRENT PTT STRIKE WHOSE END IS STILL ELUSIVE. AS OF AFTERNOON 7 NOVEMBER, SITUATION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

(A) MAJORITY OF POSTAL STRIKERS, OF WHOM NO LESS THAN 85 PERCENT BELONG TO MAIL SORTING OFFICES, IS REPORTED TO HAVE REJECTED SETTLEMENT PACKAGE OFFERED BY GOF AND ACCEPTED BY UNIONS ONLY AD REFERENDUM TO THEIR RANK AND FILE. HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST TO PARIS, AREA WHERE STRIKERS SEEM TO BE MOST INTRANSIGENT, ALL OTHER AREAS REPORT SOME RETURN-TO-WORK MOVEMENT MOSTLY BY WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN OTHER THAN SORTING OFFICES. ACCORDING TO GOF FIGURES STRIKE RATE DROPPED FROM 45 PERCENT ON WEDNESDAY TO 42 PERCENT ON THURSDAY.

(B) CGT AND CFDT STRESSING NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF PACKAGE (NO WAGE OR PERSONNEL INCREASES) RECOMMENDED REJECTION. FO AND CFTC, HOWEVER, PUT THEIR ACCENT ON CONCESSIONS OBTAINED AND LEFT TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TO DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES. AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, EVEN FO IS ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES IN ENFORCING DISCIPLINE WITH ITS LEFT WING POSTAL "LOCALS."

(C) WHILE SEPARATE MEETINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR CGT-CFDT AND FO-CFTC WITH PTT STATE SECRETARY FOR 7 NOVEMBER, MOST LIKELY EVOLUTION WILL BE FOR GOF TO REAFFIRM THAT UNIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN LAST OFFER AND TO GAMBLE ON WITHERING OF STRIKE UNDER PRESSURE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM FAMILIES AND PUBLIC OPINION.

(D) AWARE OF THIS POSSIBILITY CGT-CFDT ARE ATTEMPTING TO MOBILIZE ENTIRE PUBLIC SERVICE, INCLUDING NATIONALIZED SECTOR, BUT WITH LIMITED SUCCESS. A ROTATING STRIKE BY SNCF (RAILROADS) CONTINUES WITH NO MORE THAN 50 PERCENT PARTICIPATION. THE FRENETIC WAY IN WHICH THESE TWO MILITANT UNIONS SOUGHT TO

MOBILIZE PUBLIC SECTOR IS DUE TO FEAR THAT THE
RETURN-TO-WORK MOVEMENT MIGHT BE ACCELERATED
FOLLOWING COMING THREE-DAY WEEKEND BECAUSE OF
11 NOVEMBER HOLIDAY.

3. IN CONTRAST TO THE PTT STRIKE WHICH, AS ALREADY
REPORTED, BEGAN AS A WILDCAT MOVEMENT, COAL MINERS IN
LORRAINE BEGAN RETURNING TO WORK ON THEIR OWN LAST
MONDAY WHICH COMPELLED CGT AND CFDT TO "SUSPEND" THE
STRIKE WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A GOF PROMISE TO
CONTINUE CONSULTATIONS WITH UNIONS ON FUTURE LEVELS
OF COAL PRODUCTION.

4. MEANTIME MUTUAL CHALLENGE BETWEEN GOF AND

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LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

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CGT-CFDT ON THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL MOTIVATION OF
CURRENT STRIKES WAS ACCELERATED TO PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL.
LATEST UNION MOVE WAS LETTER (HAND CARRIED) FROM
SEGUY OF CGT TO GISCARD, CHIRAC AND CEYRAC (CNP
PRESIDENT) DEMANDING NEGOTIATIONS ON ALL UNION DEMANDS
AND CLAIMING THAT CGT IS BEING CONSTRUCTIVE AND
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RESPONSIBLE. THE REPLY CAME AT WEDNESDAY'S CABINET
MEETING WHERE GISCARD WAS QUOTED TO HAVE DECLARED
THAT "EXPRESSIONS OF DOUBTS ABOUT THE ANTI-INFLATION
PROGRAM ARE EXCLUDED AND EVERYONE SHOULD BE
AWARE OF THE DAMAGE THAT MAY BE CAUSED TO THE FRENCH
ECONOMY BY ANY ATTEMPT TO SPREAD THE DISORGANIZATION
OF PRODUCTION." CHIRAC IS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE
SIMILAR FIRM STATEMENT WHILE REAFFIRMING GOF COMMIT-
MENT TO CONTRACTURAL NEGOTIATIONS AND GUARANTEE OF
CIVIL SERVANTS REAL WAGES.

5. COMMENT. THE EXTENSION OF THE PTT STRIKE AND
THE THREAT OF MORE TO COME IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR
COUPLED WITH THE POLITICAL POLEMICS BETWEEN GOF AND
UNIONS, HAS PROVIDED AN APPARENT JUSTIFICATION FOR
SOME DRAMATIC REPORTING IN THE PRESS. HOWEVER,
EXPERIENCED AND THOUGHTFUL OBSERVERS, BOTH IN AND
OUT OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT, DO NOT HESITATE TO DESCRIBE
THE CGT-CFDT AGITATION AROUND THE PTT STRIKERS AS A
"STAGE SHOW." THIS FITS WITH THE PHILOSOPHICAL
QUIP OF THE REGIONAL LABOR DIRECTOR IN BORDEAUX AND
FORMER FRENCH LABOR ATTACHE IN BONN 1954-1966 WHO,
WHEN ASKED ABOUT PTT STRIKE, SAID THAT HE KNOWS OF
"NO STRIKE THAT LASTED FOREVER."
STONE

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